BBC Panorama 3/6/78

"Well, Mr. President - you can't say Dallas doesn't love you" - the words of Nellie Connally, the wife of the Governor of Texas, on November 22, 1963.

Until then there had been good reason to doubt it! Kennedy's brand of liberalism was not popular in the Lone Star state. And even that day - these leaflets were being distributed among the crowd. President Kennedy had made many enemies.

SOF 66 (Various voices)

Radical elements made statements. Why don't we go to the root of the problem and eliminate the number one man - J.F.K.

This guy, Leopoldo, insisted we should do something. So immediately I realized that there was an assassination plot.

He says 'can you get me four automatic rifles with a telescopic sight on them. I got the money. Money is no object'.

It was a question of how and when, not a question of whether as to the necessity of eliminating Kennedy.

Every week every President receives threats to his life. I doubt that there was any special threat to President Kennedy's life.

It appears as though something has happened in the motorcade group. There has been a shooting. I repeat, a shooting in the motorcade in the downtown area. The President's car is now going past me - now travelling at a very high rate of speed. Secret servicemen standing up in the limousine. They are armed with submachine guns. We see Mrs. Kennedy .... There's a Secret serviceman spread eagle on the top of the car. At this point, it looks as though it could have been one or two or even all of the people within the car may have been the victims ---- been struck by shots. We don't know. Parkland Hospital has been advised to stand by for a severe gun shot wound and just now we've received reports here at Parkland that Governor

Connally was shot in the upper left chest and the first unconfirmed reports say the President was hit in the head. That's an unconfirmed report that the President was hit in the head. The policeman says 'no, you cannot come in here. You cannot come in here. We'll let nobody else in'. It was definitely the President....just a minute...we have a bulletin coming in....we now switch you to Parkland Hospital.

The President of the United States is dead. President Kennedy has been shot. It's official now. The President is dead. There can be only one word to describe the picture here and that's grief.

80 minutes after the assassination, Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested. The public events of that day in Dallas remain painfully familiar to most Americans. But it's now possible for the first time, to piece together some of what was going on behind the scenes, using official government documents, that have only recently

become available.

Without any investigation, the FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, reported to Attorney General Robert Kennedy two hours after the assassination: "I think we have the man who killed the President".

SOF 347 (AIRPLANE)

The President's body came back to Washington on Air Force One.

SOF 369 (AIRPLANE)

And everyone now had only one question - Who killed John Kennedy and why?

SOF 379-398

As America mourned the lost leader - the new President, Lyndon Johnson, was determining how best to end speculation about the assassination. The massive solemnity of the last rites made it all

the more difficult for Americans to accept their President had been killed by a lone nut called Lee Harvey Oswald. So great an event could surely not have so pathetic a cause.

SOF

Every sort of rumor, with implications the new President found horrendous now sprang up. Some accused Johnson himself of being behind the assassination - others saw the new President as the next target of a conspiracy aimed at destroying the whole system of American government. On November 29, Chief Justice Earl Warren agreed to chair a Presidential Commission. "The rumors must be quenched and speculation ended," Johnson told Warren.

Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach had already written to Johnson's top aide: "The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin and that he did not have confederates."

After ten months work, the Warren Commission produced its verdict. It exactly echoed the Katzenbach memo. Oswald was the lone assassin and there was no evidence of a conspiracy. The conclusions were presented as unanimous.

The then Congressman Gerald Ford declared: "The monumental record of the Warren Commission will stand like a Gibraltar of factual literature through the ages to come".

SOF 582 (Schweiker)

I think the Warren Commission has, in fact, collapsed like a house of cards and I believe that the Warren Commission was set up at the time to feed Pablum to the American people for reasons not yet known and that one of the biggest cover-ups in the history of our country occurred at that time.

Senator Schweiker's views are based on his official investigation into the performance

of the FBI and the CIA at the time of the assassination.

SOF 623 (Schweiker)

The most important thing was that the intelligence agencies did all the wrong things if they really were looking for conspiracy or to find out who killed John Kennedy.

Schweiker's Committee was formed as a result of Watergate. Its findings, together with startling new evidence unknown to the Warren Commission, caused Congress to set up its own Assassinations Committee. It has a larger staff and a larger budget than the Warren Commission, plus its own investigators. Its mandate includes a complete re-investigation of the murder of John F. Kennedy.

SOF 474

(Chairman) The Committee will come to order.

(Preyor) At this stage we are playing the cards very close to our vest. We

don't want things to come out piecemeal and have speculation again down one line of inquiry and so at this time, we aren't revealing or going into evidence.

The Assassinations Committee is now holding sessions behind closed doors after beginning as a public shambles. It's unlikely to issue a report this year.

But it is now possible to make public the source of many of the Committee's new leads. For years, many of the essential documents relating to the Kennedy Assassination were kept classified - under tight security in the National Archives. But under the Freedom of Information Act many official documents that the government and its agencies would prefer to keep secret have been pried out. Within the past few months, in much publicized releases, the FBI has made available some 80,000 pages of its own records about the assassination. Significantly, however, the Bureau has still held back ten per cent of its material - claiming reasons of national security,

or to protect informants or on grounds of privacy. Many documents released under the "Freedom of Information Act" are a source of frustration. This CIA memo has half blank first pages then a blank page and so on and on. Such industry by the censor has fuelled suspicions that a cover-up is continuing.

SOF 862 (Preyor)

Well, there have been some instances of files being, I guess you would say, maliciously withheld or even destroyed. Let me give you an example without running the risk of maligning someone myself. Where we don't know what the motive is this is the kind of problem we run into. The Pentagon has destroyed its Kennedy assassination files. The Army file on the Kennedy assassination has been destroyed and we don't know why that was done.

(Q) Your name is Lee Harvey Oswald - O S W A L D.

80 minutes after the assassination, Lee Harvey Oswald, an ex-Marine, age 24, was arrested, and charged with shooting a police officer.

SOF (Oswald and Reporters)

I really don't know what the situation is about. Nobody has told me anything of murdering a policeman. I know nothing more than that. I do request someone to come forward to give me a legal assistance.

(Q) Did you kill the President?

No, I've not been charged with that. In fact, nobody has said that to me yet. The first thing I heard about it was when the newspaper reporters in the hall asked me that question.

Dallas police produced the alleged Kennedy murder weapon. They claimed to have found it one hour after the assassination in the Texas School Book Depository and that it belonged to Lee Harvey Oswald.

SOF

Without any doubt he's the killer. The law says beyond a reasonable doubt to a moral certainty. There's no question that he was the killer of Kennedy.